

I applaud your leadership, Mr. President. And I want to thank those around the table for showing courage and vision and resolve. Many of the troops of the countries represented here have returned home, but they have done so on success. And I want to applaud your steadfast leadership and thank the people of your respective countries for making the sacrifices so that others can live in a free society.

Mr. President, we've still got work to do, but there is no doubt that the situation in Iraq has changed substantially. There's no doubt that mothers are able to send their child to school without fear of carnage. Oh, there's still killers amongst your—in your midst, but your Government has been steadfast in bringing people to justice who are trying to undermine your democracy.

So I look forward to working with you. And I want to thank you for being here, and I thank you for honoring those in this room today and the peoples of their country.

Mr. President. Yes, please.

President Jalal Talabani of Iraq. Mr. President, I am grateful for your kind words. And I'm here, on behalf of the Iraqi people, to express my deepest appreciation for all countries who participated in the breaking Iraq from worst kind of dictatorship.

Of course, noble and responsible nations must bear their sacrifice in order to free the oppressed and bring citizens from the worst kind of dictatorship. Nevertheless, on behalf of the people of Iraq, I want to express my deepest condolences for your brave soldiers and civilians who have lost their lives while standing up for our shared values of freedom and democracy.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your brave leadership and your decision to liberate Iraq from worst kind of dictatorship. And thanks for all friends and their countries and Governments who participated from the beginning to liberate our country and rebuild a new Iraq, a democratic, federated, united, independent Iraq, which will help to promote democracy in the Middle East and help peace and security in the Middle East.

Thank you again, all of you, and you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:08 p.m. at the United Nations Headquarters. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations in New York City

September 23, 2008

Mr. Secretary-General, this is my eighth chance to welcome you to New York, and I'm honored to do so. You did mention, I'm heading into retirement—[laughter]—but it has been a joy to work with you, the staff, and many of the leaders here in this hall.

It is my honor to propose a toast, Mr. Secretary-General, to you and to your hard work. May God bless all in the room, and Mr. Secretary-General, may God continue to bless you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:45 p.m. at the United Nations Headquarters. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-General Ban.

Remarks to Leaders of the Western Hemisphere in New York City

September 24, 2008

Listen, thank you all very much for being here. I'm joined by leaders throughout our hemisphere to discuss trade and prosperity. I know they're going to want to hear about the rescue plan that we have submitted to the Congress. They can see our legislative process is full of give-and-take, that there's ample debate. But I am confident that when it's all said and done, there will be a robust plan, and there needs to be.

Each of the 11 countries here has a free trade agreement with the United States or one pending before Congress. Free and fair trade is in our mutual interests.

What's interesting about free and fair trade amongst the nations is that the people benefit. For example, the Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement is in its early stages, but trade between participating countries with the United States is up

23 percent. That translates to jobs and prosperity. In the 5 years since the free trade agreement between the United States and Chile took effect, trade between our two nations has increased by more than 180 percent. And that's positive. In other words, these agreements are mutually beneficial. And most importantly, they help small-business owners and workers and farmers and ranchers.

In the nearly 15 years since NAFTA entered into force, trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico has increased by a combined total of more than 200 percent.

Today our countries are launching the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Initiative to continue this progress. This initiative will provide a forum where leaders can work to ensure that the benefits of trade are broadly shared. It will deepen the connections among regional markets. It will expand our cooperation on development issues. This is a very promising initiative, and I expect positive results when our representatives meet on these issues later this year.

It's important for the American people to understand that exports benefit workers. Half of our growth last year was the result of trade. And therefore, it's in our interest to continue to open up markets, particularly in our own neighborhood. There are three free trade agreements pending in the Congress today: South Korea, Panama, and Colombia. Obviously, two of those are with nations in our own hemisphere. The Colombia free trade agreement will be good for Colombia; it will be good for America. The President and I have worked diligently to make sure this is a fair agreement, and Congress needs to pass it.

The Panamanian agreement—it's good for Panama, it's good for America. And Congress ought to pass that agreement too. It's important that these agreements be passed as soon as possible.

I want to thank the leaders for joining us. I'm looking forward to our discussion. I appreciate your hard work in working to make sure your people and your countries have great opportunities. One such opportunity is access to jobs provided by markets.

Thank you for your vision, and thank you for your leadership. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:01 a.m. at the Council of the Americas Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks During a Discussion With President Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez of El Salvador in New York City

September 24, 2008

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you.

I want to let my friend know, and the people of El Salvador, that the United States will extend TPS status to El Salvadorians living in our country. This is a decision that was made to improve the lives of El Salvadorians.

I'm proud to make this announcement with you standing by my side. You've been a very strong and courageous leader, and you have been a friend. And I know this is an issue of concern to you because you care deeply about the people of your country. And so when you get back home, you can tell the people that TPS has been extended.

Thank you, sir.

President Saca. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, President, for extending for 18 months more the TPS for the people of El Salvador. This is going to benefit our Salvadorian people with—since we have been walking in liberty, in democracy, and in integration.

Thank you very much this morning for this extension.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:53 a.m. at the Council of the Americas Headquarters. President Saca spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.